



# Regional retention of migrants: critical success factors





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# Foreword

There is significant academic, political and policy interest in the social and economic costs of out-migration from regional communities, reflecting ongoing concerns about the continued viability of many small towns and regional centres.

In response to this interest, Australian governments at the national, state and territory and local levels have developed a range of programs attempting to help drive economic prosperity in the regions. In particular, successive governments have made particular efforts to leverage the migration program as one means of supporting regional development and of helping to meet the skills needs of regional employers.

This research, which was part of the then Department of Immigration and Citizenship's 2010-11 Research and Evaluation Programme, investigated the critical success factors that facilitate migrant retention in regional communities. It considers the broader trends that might influence regional settlement patterns, as well as interdisciplinary literature and policy approaches relevant to regional development.

The research draws on research literature and information provided by Australian governments. In particular, it builds on a previously commissioned study, *Factors that influence skilled migrants locating in regional areas*, conducted by the Social Science Unit at the University of Queensland, which has been published on the department's website. The previous research also considered the factors relevant to migrants' decisions to settle and stay in regional Australia, although it focuses on a very small group of skilled migrants in the Northern Territory and some other regional areas.

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# Introduction

Regional Australia is experiencing a range of economic and social trends that are challenging the ability of many communities to adapt.<sup>1</sup> In some cases, these trends threaten the continued viability of smaller centres that are struggling to develop sustainable communities and to support viable industries, employment opportunities and a high quality of life for residents.<sup>2</sup> For example, regional areas are experiencing significant population decline due to the out-migration of young people seeking better education and employment opportunities and lifestyle changes in the major metropolitan centres. This in turn creates skills shortages in some regionally based industries and has led to a rapidly increasing age profile in rural and regional communities.<sup>3</sup>

These demographic changes also place increased pressure on demand for aged based services in areas already suffering from reduced access and service delivery 'fatigue'.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, the effects of out-migration and demographic changes are compounded by the fact that voluntary in-migration and the natural birth rate are not at levels sufficient enough to offset the declining population trends on their own.<sup>5</sup> The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) for example, has noted that while Australia's overall population has grown by 1.7% since 2009, this growth has been concentrated in inner-city areas, outer suburbs, some urban infill areas and along the coast.<sup>6</sup> Inland, rural areas on the other hand, have experienced population decline, particularly in north-eastern and south-eastern parts of Australia and in rural Western Australia.<sup>7</sup>

In response to these challenges, Australian governments at the national, state and territory and local levels have developed a range of programs attempting to help drive economic prosperity in the regions.<sup>8</sup> At the national level, the Australian Government maintains various policy initiatives and incentives that are intended to encourage people to relocate to regional areas and to offset some of the economic pressures impacting those communities. For example, successive governments have made particular efforts to leverage the migration program as one means of

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1 Department of Transport and Regional Services 2001, *The Success Factors – managing change in regional Australia*, Canberra.

2 Department of Transport and Regional Services 2001, *The Success Factors – managing change in regional Australia*, Canberra; Collits, P 2000, *Small Town Decline and Survival: Trends, Success Factors and Policy Issues*, paper presented at the Future of Australia's Country Towns conference, 29 June, Bendigo.

3 Department of Transport and Regional Services 2001, *The Success Factors – managing change in regional Australia*, Canberra.

4 Collits, P 2000, *Small Town Decline and Survival: Trends, Success Factors and Policy Issues*, paper presented at the Future of Australia's Country Towns conference, 29 June, Bendigo.

5 Hugo, G 2008, 'Australia's State Specific and Regional Migration Scheme: An Assessment of its Impacts in South Australia', *International Migration & Integration*, vol. 9, pp. 125-145.

6 Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011, *3218.0 - Regional Population Growth, Australia, 2009-10*, <[www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Products/3218.0~2009-10~Main+Features~Main+Features?OpenDocument#PARALINK9](http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Products/3218.0~2009-10~Main+Features~Main+Features?OpenDocument#PARALINK9)> accessed 20 August 2011>.

7 Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011, *3218.0 - Regional Population Growth, Australia, 2009-10*, <[www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Products/3218.0~2009-10~Main+Features~Main+Features?OpenDocument#PARALINK9](http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Products/3218.0~2009-10~Main+Features~Main+Features?OpenDocument#PARALINK9)> accessed 20 August 2011>.

8 See, for example, Albanese, A 2008, *Regional Development Australia*, Statement by the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government, Canberra; Queensland Government 2010, *Economic Development in Regional Queensland*, <[www.regions.qld.gov.au/dsdweb/v4/apps/web/content.cfm?id=4642](http://www.regions.qld.gov.au/dsdweb/v4/apps/web/content.cfm?id=4642)> accessed 20 August 2011; New South Wales Government, Regional NSW, <[www.business.nsw.gov.au/invest-in-nsw/regional-nsw](http://www.business.nsw.gov.au/invest-in-nsw/regional-nsw)> accessed 20 August 2011; State Government Victoria, Developing Rural and Regional Victoria, <[www.rdv.vic.gov.au/](http://www.rdv.vic.gov.au/)> accessed 20 August 2011.

supporting regional development and of helping to meet the skills needs of regional employers.<sup>9</sup> The stated goal of interventions in the migration program is to attract young, skilled, English speaking migrants to areas of Australia where they are most needed, and include specific visa categories for migrants moving to regional areas, flexible program provisions and threshold criteria for skilled migrants, and a range of settlement services for Humanitarian entrants in rural and regional areas.<sup>10</sup>

However, the extent to which these interventions actually facilitate long-term regional retention remains unclear. Indeed, some of the literature suggests that migration based interventions on their own cannot address the long-term issues that face regional areas. For example, while visa incentives and settlement services may assist in drawing people to regional communities and in supporting them in their early settlement stages, they may be insufficient in encouraging migrant retention over longer periods of time.<sup>11</sup> While some studies have found no clear evidence that migrants leave regional communities once their visa mandated settlement periods expire,<sup>12</sup> the concern remains that many migrants relocate to metropolitan areas 'once freed from [their] visa requirements'.<sup>13</sup>

Yet, it is the longer-term settlement and retention of migrants that is currently seen as providing the best opportunity for regional Australia to benefit from the skills, experience and competitive qualifications that migrants bring to the workforce and to the receiving community.<sup>14</sup> According to the literature, in the context of regional development, greater attention may therefore need to be placed not only on attracting migrants to regional areas, but also on facilitating their retention in those areas over the long-term. This in turn requires an understanding of the factors that contribute to regional retention, which can help develop more effective policies in this important area. However, it is equally important to recognise that developing an understanding of these predominantly micro-level factors by itself is insufficient. There are also a range of broader issues that must be understood in order to gain a more complete picture of the dynamics of internal migration and regional retention.

To that end, Part 1 of this report seeks to situate the academic discourse on the retention of migrants into a broader framework that takes different fields of study into account. In particular, it attempts to show how areas of academic research and practice not traditionally linked with regional retention, including international migration and refugee settlement, are highly relevant to questions about internal migration. Part 2 moves to an examination of the more 'micro-level' literature on the retention of migrants. It surveys the literature on migrant retention to identify the factors commonly highlighted as being essential to long-term retention, with a view to identifying the areas in which further policy development could lead to better regional development outcomes.

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9 Griffiths, J, Laffan, W and Jones, A 2010, Factors that influence skilled migrants locating in regional areas, Institute for Social Science Research, Brisbane; Wulff, M and Dharmalingam, A 2008, 'Retaining Skilled Migrants in Regional Australia: The Role of Social Connectedness', *International Migration & Integration*, vol. 9, pp. 147-160; Hugo, G, Khoo, SE, and McDonald, P 2006, 'Attracting Skilled Migrants to Regional Areas: What Does It Take?', *People and Place*, vol. 14, no. 3, pp. 26-36; Hugo, G 2008, 'Australia's State Specific and Regional Migration Scheme: An Assessment of its Impacts in South Australia', *International Migration & Integration*, vol. 9, pp. 125-145.

10 Department of Immigration and Citizenship 2011, Fact Sheet 26 – State Specific Regional Migration, <[www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/26state.htm](http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/26state.htm)> accessed 20 August 2011.

11 Wulff, M and Dharmalingam, A 2008, 'Retaining Skilled Migrants in Regional Australia: The Role of Social Connectedness', *International Migration & Integration*, vol. 9, pp. 147-160.

12 Department of Immigration and Citizenship 2011, *Quarterly Economic Briefing*, Canberra.

13 Wulff, M and Dharmalingam, A 2008, 'Retaining Skilled Migrants in Regional Australia: The Role of Social Connectedness', *International Migration & Integration*, vol. 9, pp. 147-160; Griffiths, J, Laffan, W and Jones, A 2010, Factors that influence skilled migrants locating in regional areas, Institute for Social Science Research, Brisbane.

14 Wulff, M and Dharmalingam, A 2008, 'Retaining Skilled Migrants in Regional Australia: The Role of Social Connectedness', *International Migration & Integration*, vol. 9, pp. 147-160.

## Part 1: Regional migration in context

Owing to government and community level concerns about the plight of many regional areas, academic and political discourse regarding the regions is focused primarily on responding to the social and economic costs of out-migration and the decline of regional communities. Literature in both the regional development and migration fields places a strong emphasis on understanding the factors driving this decline, particularly where the movement of people away from the regions is concerned, and on developing tangible interventions through which to respond. While this is clearly central to the regional development agenda, what the current literature lacks is a broader, overarching framework within which to view the movement of people away from regional communities. In particular, there are a number of different areas of study that are relevant to questions about the regional retention of migrants, but the link between these areas is rarely made. However, conceptualising regional development and migration in a broader context is useful not only in providing a more holistic understanding of the factors impacting on migration to and from regional areas, but also in bringing together the lessons from diverse fields of practice that may be relevant to regional development.

This in turn may reveal additional approaches to arresting the decline of regional communities and in identifying measures to facilitate the longer-term settlement of people in those areas. It may also highlight broader challenges that will mediate the impact that government interventions actually have on facilitating retention, and therefore on the broader regional development agenda. This last point is particularly important because, while the critical success factors presented in this paper may increase the probability that people will remain in regional areas, retention can never be guaranteed, even when the factors are addressed.

This is not to suggest that governments and communities should not attempt to facilitate retention or to reinvigorate the regions. It is simply a recognition of the fact that, where the migration of people away from the regions is concerned, there may be broader trends at play that are outside the control of government and that may frustrate efforts to facilitate retention. In this respect, it is important for policy makers to have realistic expectations about what can be achieved, and to tailor their responses taking into account a broader range of factors. In contrast to most of the literature on regional retention, which seeks an answer to the question 'how can migrants be retained in the regions?', this paper therefore asks, 'given the broader dynamics of migration, how can governments best increase the *probability* of regional retention?'.

### Linking internal and international migration

A key area in which insufficient links have been made between regional retention and other areas of policy and research is in the context of international migration. Whereas most of the literature on retention focuses on the national and regional drivers of people movement, including the differentials between big cities and regional areas,<sup>15</sup> it is equally important to see migration within countries as one component of that which occurs between countries. For example, King and Skeldon of Sussex University argue that, while a distinction between internal and international migration does need to be maintained, internal migration patterns should nevertheless be linked to the broader 'systems' in which people movement occurs.<sup>16</sup> Taking this approach is important, they argue, because the distinction between internal and international mobility is becoming increasingly blurred and indeed, internal migration can in many cases be considered one part in a sequence of movements within and between sending and receiving countries.<sup>17</sup> To date however, the field of migration studies has remained divided between

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15 See, for example, the concept of 'sinks' and 'sources' in Hugo, G and Harris, K 2011, *Population Distribution Effects of Migration In Australia*, Report for the Department of Immigration and Citizenship.

16 King, R and Skeldon, R 2010, 'Mind the Gap! Integrating Approaches to Internal and International Migration', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, vol. 36, no. 10, pp. 1619-1646.

17 King, R and Skeldon, R 2010, 'Mind the Gap! Integrating Approaches to Internal and International Migration', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, vol. 36, no. 10, pp. 1619-1646.

'different literatures, concepts, methods and policy agendas' associated with internal and international migration.<sup>18</sup>

One example of the type of broader international factors or 'systems' that can affect internal mobility is the trend towards circular migration. For example, one of the biggest shifts in Australian migration patterns over the past two decades has been the increase in temporary and circular migration.<sup>19</sup> Between 1995 and 2004, the number of temporary migrants in Australia tripled, with the inflow of temporary workers being around 115 percent of the number of permanent settlers over the same period.<sup>20</sup> At the same time, record numbers of migrants are themselves emigrating from Australia. While the majority of these people (60.8 percent) return to their country of birth, the remainder move on to a third country.<sup>21</sup> Increasing temporary migration is also becoming a feature of migration patterns at the international level. Similar trends have emerged in other migrant receiving countries for example, with the number of temporary workers growing by an average of 10.4 percent annually between 1997 and 2004 in the US; 175 percent over the period between 1998 and 2004 in New Zealand; and 133 percent over the period between 1998 and 2004 in France.<sup>22</sup> Taken together, these figures reflect the modern view of migration, which is increasingly described as being 'repeat, rotating, multiple, seasonal, [and] cyclical'.<sup>23</sup>

When these trends are overlaid with studies about internal migration, it becomes clear that the movement of international migrants within destination countries may be as much about these broader mobility patterns as it is about factors differentiating rural and metropolitan communities. In other words, if the broader international trend is for migrants to settle temporarily in particular destination communities before returning home or moving elsewhere, it follows that this trend may also be applicable in the context of migrant settlement in rural and regional communities. Migrants may only arrive for brief periods before moving elsewhere, either to a different location within the destination country or to another country altogether. This has clear implications for governments concerned with retaining migrants in regional communities, and reinforces the need to be realistic about the extent to which the long-term retention of migrants in regional areas can be achieved.

The concept of the feedback loop provides another example of the type of 'system' that might impact on regional migration and retention. Put simply, the term 'feedback loop' refers to the impact that migration itself has on the sending and receiving communities, which can in turn affect future migration patterns. Examples of this include, as de Haas has noted, 'the impact of migration on inequality, social stratification, economic growth, entrepreneurship and cultural change'.<sup>24</sup> For example, migration into a particular locality may create further out-migration, or limit in-migration, by displacing current residents or by limiting opportunities for new migrants. King and Skeldon for example, highlight the 'knock-on' effects of migration, such as where 'the arrival of new migrants is accompanied by, or precipitates the out-migration of the native born

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18 King, R and Skeldon, R 2010, 'Mind the Gap! Integrating Approaches to Internal and International Migration', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, vol. 36, no. 10, pp. 1619-1646.

19 Hugo, G and Harris, K 2011, *Population Distribution Effects of Migration In Australia*, Report for the Department of Immigration and Citizenship.

20 Agunias, D and Newland, K 2007, 'Circular Migration and Development: Trends, Policy Routes, and Ways Forward', *MPI Policy Brief*, April.

21 Department of Immigration and Citizenship 2011, *Population Flows: Immigration Aspects 2009-10 Edition*, Canberra.

22 Agunias, D and Newland, K 2007, 'Circular Migration and Development: Trends, Policy Routes, and Ways Forward', *MPI Policy Brief*, April.

23 Vertovec, S 2007, 'Circular Migration: the way forward in global policy?', *Working Paper 4*, International Migration Institute, Oxford.

24 De Haas, H 2010, 'The Internal Dynamics of Migration Processes: A Theoretical Inquiry', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, vol. 36, no. 10, pp. 1587-1617.

population (or former migrants)'; or where migrants 'take advantage of opportunities (for example jobs, or housing) that would otherwise have been taken by [other] internal migrants'.<sup>25</sup>

Equally however, migration may change the social and economic landscape by affecting conditions in a way that could attract future migrants. Indeed, there is a longstanding view in the academic literature that '[o]nce begun, migration flows often become self-sustaining, reflecting the establishment of networks of information, assistance and obligations which develop between migrants in the host society and friends and relatives in the sending area'. Drawing on a range of other literature for example, de Haas discusses how these various feedback loops may help to make migration processes self-sustaining. He points to a range of factors, such as migration-driven employment growth, the establishment of ethnic enclaves and businesses, and the segmentation of labour markets (including through the creation of preferences for migrant labour in certain niche occupations) as potentially helping to perpetuate migration patterns to receiving communities.<sup>26</sup>

Similarly, Castles and Miller note that migrant networks 'facilitate processes of settlement and community formation in the immigration area', including through the formation of social and economic infrastructure such as 'places of worship, associations, shops, cafes, professionals (such as lawyers and doctors), and other services'.<sup>27</sup> The point to note about this is the fact that migrant 'networks' and feedback loops could in some cases create an environment conducive to attracting more migrants. Clearly, this would be of great benefit from a regional development perspective, if managed responsibly, taking into account labour needs, community attitudes, infrastructure and so on. However, it may also require a reconfiguration of how governments perceive retention and the preferences they adopt in terms of temporary or permanent migration in the regional development context. When linked to the trends in circular migration for example, a picture emerges of migration patterns that are highly fluid, changeable, and potentially quite temporary. New thinking may therefore be required on whether migrants represent, as International Organization for Migration Director General William Swing describes, 'a revolving pool of talent, or a stable long-term investment',<sup>28</sup> including in the regional development context.

## **Linking the movement of migrants to that of the broader population**

Quite aside from the influence of broader international trends and migration systems on internal mobility, it is also important to note the links between the movement of migrants and that of the broader population. The factors driving migration from regional areas may be as equally applicable to the general community as they are to migrants, a view that is easily drawn when the literature on both migrant retention and regional development is considered.<sup>29</sup> For example, studies into the out-migration of locally born people from regional communities have identified a range of factors, including a lack of employment opportunities, poor infrastructure and lifestyle

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25 King, R and Skeldon, R 2010, 'Mind the Gap! Integrating Approaches to Internal and International Migration', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, vol. 36, no. 10, pp. 1619-1646.

26 De Haas, H 2010, 'The Internal Dynamics of Migration Processes: A Theoretical Inquiry', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, vol. 36, no. 10, pp. 1587-1617.

27 Castles, S and Miller, M 2009, *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World*, Palgrave MacMillan, New York.

28 Swing, W 2011, *Keynote Address*, address to the Metropolis 2011 Conference, Ponta Delgada, 12-16 September 2011.

29 Pruegger, V [date unknown], An Analysis of Immigrant Attraction and Retention Patterns among Western Canadian CMAs, Prairie Metropolis Centre Working Paper Series, Calgary; Wulff, M and Dharmalingam, A 2008, 'Retaining Skilled Migrants in Regional Australia: The Role of Social Connectedness', *International Migration & Integration*, vol. 9, pp. 147-160; Collits, P 2000, Small Town Decline and Survival: Trends, Success Factors and Policy Issues, paper presented at the Future of Australia's Country Towns conference, 29 June, Bendigo.

considerations as being amongst the key factors driving the significant levels of out-migration of locally born populations, and particularly young people.<sup>30</sup>

**Table 1: Factors influencing the selection of specific placement communities and placement of resettled refugees**

Factors:	Considerations:
Availability of secure and affordable housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rental costs relative to the earning potential of resettled refugees;</li> <li>• Compatibility between housing supply and common family formations (e.g. singles or large families).</li> </ul>
Access to employment opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initial employment opportunities;</li> <li>• Opportunities for advancement in the labour force.</li> </ul>
Presence of appropriate cultural and religious support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Established ethno-cultural communities and ethno-cultural institutions;</li> <li>• Ethno-cultural support organisations.</li> </ul>
Commitment of community participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Existence of local leaders willing to serve as advocates for refugee resettlement;</li> <li>• Willingness of the local community to provide support through volunteer and other support programs.</li> </ul>
Sufficient capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Existence of infrastructure to resettle sufficient numbers of refugees to make the site viable in both human and economic terms.</li> </ul>
Availability of key resettlement services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Existence of requisite infrastructure, including adequately funded, readily accessible and linguistically and culturally appropriate services such as language instruction, medical care, employment counselling and training and services for survivors of torture and trauma;</li> <li>• Local work force capacity (i.e. do local personnel have the requisite expertise or will intensive work force development be required?)</li> </ul>
Partnership potential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Existence of NGOs, local services agencies and civic or religious organisations to serve as partners in supporting newly arrived refugees.</li> </ul>
Attitude and environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extent to which the community exhibits openness to strangers and a respect for religious and cultural diversity.</li> </ul>

Source: UNHCR 2002, *Refugee Resettlement: An International Handbook to Guide Reception and Integration*, Geneva; adapted from Levine, N 2001, *Placement strategies to enhance*

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<sup>30</sup> See, for example, Eacott, C and Sonn, C 2006, 'Beyond education and employment: Exploring youth experiences of their communities, place attachment and reasons for migration', *Rural Society*, vol. 16, no. 2, pp. 199-214.

effective integration of resettled refugees, paper presented to the International Conference for the Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees, April, Sweden.

As will be seen in Part 2 of this paper, these factors are also commonly highlighted as being important considerations affecting migrants' decisions about where they locate. However, this connection is rarely drawn out in the literature, which again remains segregated into discussions about regional development and migrant retention respectively. When the two separate bodies of academic thought are brought together however, it becomes clear that the secondary movement of migrants away from regional centres may in some cases simply reflect the general trends of out-migration of the rest of the population. This is particularly the case in the Australian context, where studies have already shown that Australian residents, (including both locally born people and migrants) are highly mobile and move frequently.<sup>31</sup> In fact, Australia has one of the most residentially mobile populations of any country,<sup>32</sup> which has clear implications for how governments approach regional development. The underlying assumption of this is that, if particular communities do not possess sufficient services and infrastructure, or if employment opportunities are not available, migrants and the locally born population are likely to be attracted to alternative locations. As Monash University's Bob Birrell has asked, '[i]f young and skilled Australian residents who have their roots in regional areas are (on balance) leaving, how are newly arrived foreign-born residents to be attracted?'<sup>33</sup>

## Linking regional retention to refugee settlement

Similarly, the factors that are at play in the regional retention context are likely to be the same as those that exist in relation to settlement outcomes broadly speaking. While in Australia, 'settlement' is generally referred to primarily in the context of refugees and Humanitarian entrants, parallels can be drawn between the factors influencing the retention of refugees and those impacting other migrants, including skilled migrants. For example, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has noted that '[i]n the longer term, resettled refugees may choose to move in search of employment or housing and social conditions which better meet their needs', and that '[i]f refugees are placed in communities where they are unable to secure basic resources required for integration they may be compelled to move soon after arrival'.<sup>34</sup> In that context, the UNHCR identifies a number of factors that can influence placement of resettled refugees, which are broadly aligned with the factors identified throughout much of the literature on the regional retention of migrants (see Table 1).

Similarly, some contributions to the literature on internal migration have noted that, in the context of 'social integration', the parallels with internal, rural-urban migration are potentially close, although are rarely drawn out in comparative studies.<sup>35</sup> Programs designed to facilitate the retention of migrants should therefore be developed with reference to the more specific policy and literature on refugee settlement. While it is still important to recognise that refugee and Humanitarian entrants have specific needs that differ considerably from those of the general population and of other migrants, the critical success factors identified here should nevertheless be considered in the context of the lessons that can be derived from refugee settlement programs and policy. These issues will be explored further in relation to each of the critical success factors, which are discussed in Part 2 below.

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31 Hugo, G and Harris, K 2011, *Population Distribution Effects of Migration In Australia*, Report for the Department of Immigration and Citizenship.

32 Hugo, G and Harris, K 2011, *Population Distribution Effects of Migration In Australia*, Report for the Department of Immigration and Citizenship.

33 Birrell, B 2003, 'Redistributing Migrants: The Labor Agenda', *People and Place*, vol. 11, no. 4, pp. 15-26; Wulff, M and Dharmalingam, A 2008, 'Retaining Skilled Migrants in Regional Australia: The Role of Social Connectedness', *International Migration & Integration*, vol. 9, pp. 147-160.

34 UNHCR 2002, *Refugee Resettlement: An International Handbook to Guide Reception and Integration*, Geneva.

35 King, R and Skeldon, R 2010, 'Mind the Gap! Integrating Approaches to Internal and International Migration', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, vol. 36, no. 10, pp. 1619-1646.

## Linking regional retention to place-based interventions

Just as the processes and interventions related to refugee settlement can provide important lessons in the regional development context, government and community activities focused on other public policy issues may also be informative. This is particularly the case in respect of policy initiatives that are implemented using a place-based approach. In Australia, as elsewhere, the concept of a place-based approach is increasingly being utilised as a means of responding to a range of public policy issues including urban renewal, community disadvantage and poverty, health, employment and Indigenous affairs.<sup>36</sup> While the concept itself is not new, having been utilised in Australia as early as 1944 (including in the regional development context throughout the early 1970s) it is undergoing somewhat of a resurgence as a model of policy intervention.<sup>37</sup> There is renewed recognition that public policy issues often go beyond the capacity of any one organisation to respond, have complex and multi-pronged causes and influences and require the engagement of citizens and stakeholders in all aspects of policy making and implementation. In this respect, the place-based model is viewed favourably because it brings together diverse stakeholders and is focused on building the capacity of the target community to own, and effectively address the issues it faces. This is in contrast to 'traditional' policy approaches, which are said to reduce complex problems into 'separate, rationally manageable components'<sup>38</sup> that are tackled by single agencies, often in isolation.

In the context of attempting to facilitate the retention of migrants in regional communities, a place-based approach may therefore have some important benefits, including because the critical success factors that can facilitate retention are applicable across jurisdictions. Different levels of government may have sole or overlapping responsibility for the range of issues impacting on retention, such as employment, healthcare, education and housing, and bringing each of the responsible agencies and associated community organisations together as part of a place-based approach could therefore have some value. Similarly, the presence or absence of the critical success factors can be context specific, meaning that the areas of focus for any interventions will be different depending on the community in question. Tailoring interventions to the specific requirements of the local community and of new migrants through a coordinated place-based approach may therefore prove to be a better alternative to methods that apply generic interventions across all regional areas. As McDonald-Wilmsen has argued for example, a better approach to regional development may be to tailor migrant settlement policy to 'particular communities rather than indiscriminately across the vast expanse of "designated" regions'<sup>39</sup>, as is the case under current SSRM mechanisms.

Additionally, as the refugee settlement literature again highlights, placing new arrivals in host communities requires that governments find an appropriate match between the needs of migrants and the resources available in the receiving community. The UNHCR notes for example, that where a particular community offers some critical integration resources (such as employment and ethnic community support) but lacks others (such as social support services), developmental initiatives may be useful to support capacity building, and therefore better settlement, in the community.<sup>40</sup> This type of approach is akin to a place-based model, and has been introduced to some extent in countries including Australia, where particular regional centres are now promoted as refugee settlement locations based on factors including employment opportunities, availability of settlement services and adequate infrastructure and mainstream services.<sup>41</sup> Applying this to a broader group of migrants in the regional development context may help to facilitate better outcomes as far as retention in regional communities is

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36 Australian Social Inclusion Board 2011, *Governance Models for Location Based Initiatives*, Canberra.

37 Australian Social Inclusion Board 2011, *Governance Models for Location Based Initiatives*, Canberra.

38 Australian Social Inclusion Board 2011, *Governance Models for Location Based Initiatives*, Canberra.

39 McDonald-Wilmsen et al 2009, 'Resettling Refugees in Rural and Regional Australia: Learning from Recent Policy and Program Initiatives', *The Australian Journal of Public Administration*, vol. 68, no. 1, pp. 97-111.

40 UNHCR 2002, *Refugee Resettlement: An International Handbook to Guide Reception and Integration*, Geneva.

41 Department of Immigration and Citizenship 2006, *National Framework for Settlement Planning*, Canberra.

concerned, and applying the lessons from both refugee settlement and other interventions utilising a place-based model would also be valuable in that respect.

A commonly noted pitfall of the place-based model is that, because of its focus on a specific place, it can lead to broader issues being ignored.<sup>42</sup> But as academic papers on the place-based model have shown, the trajectory of particular communities is 'often shaped more by its regional context than by local interventions', and it is therefore important to understand how broader patterns 'shape local opportunities'.<sup>43</sup> The international and national factors identified at the start of this section will therefore continue to be issues that need to be taken into account, perhaps more so when the focus of interventions is on very specific localities. However, while the place-based model can create a risk that broader trends are disregarded, it could potentially also provide a useful mechanism through which to leverage those trends for the benefit of the target community. This is particularly the case in the context of the types of migration patterns outlined above.

Noting both the trends towards temporary and circular migration and the evolution and impact of migration networks for example, a novel approach may be to encourage migratory links between particular regional communities and source communities overseas, using the place-based model. Reflecting on the various social and economic links that can emerge because of migrant networks and migration patterns, various studies have highlighted how the formation of these links can occur not just on a transnational basis, that is, between countries, but also 'trans-locally'; between communities within those countries.<sup>44</sup> Commonly noted examples include the networks that have been established between Silicon Valley in the US and the Hsinchu region of Taiwan, and between Silicon Valley and Bangalore and Hyderabad in India.<sup>45</sup> The networks that have been established between these areas are said to promote significant business cooperation and technological transfers, as well as to build significant bridges between each of the sites in terms of sources of skilled labour, goods and services.<sup>46</sup>

One of the studies that investigated these particular locations noted that in 1990, immigrants accounted for 32 percent of the region's total scientific and engineering workforce, and were considered to have made a 'substantial and growing contribution to regional job and wealth creation'. In addition, they also established a 'rich fabric of professional and associational activities that facilitate immigrant job search, information exchange, access to capital and managerial know how, and the creation of shared ethnic identities'.<sup>47</sup> While these networks were generally established serendipitously, without government intervention, one of the conclusions arising from the report was that 'the challenge of economic development in coming decades will increasingly involve building such transnational (or trans-local) social and professional linkages'.<sup>48</sup> In other words, the report noted the potential for governments to attempt to facilitate

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42 Cytron, N 2010, 'Improving the Outcomes of Place-Based Initiatives', *Community Investments*, vol. 22, no. 1, pp. 2-37.

43 Australian Social Inclusion Board 2011, *Governance Models for Location Based Initiatives*, Canberra; see also Cytron, N 2010, 'Improving the Outcomes of Place-Based Initiatives', *Community Investments*, vol. 22, no. 1, pp. 2-37.

44 Vertovec, S 2001, *Transnational Networks and Skilled Labour Migration*, paper presented at Ladenburger Diskurs "Migration" Gottlieb Daimler und Karl Benz-Stiftung, Ladenburg, 14-15 February.

45 Saxenian, AL 1999, *Silicon Valley's New Immigrant Entrepreneurs*, Public Policy Institute of California, San Francisco; Vertovec, S 2001, *Transnational Networks and Skilled Labour Migration*, paper presented at Ladenburger Diskurs "Migration" Gottlieb Daimler und Karl Benz-Stiftung, Ladenburg, 14-15 February.

46 Vertovec, S 2001, *Transnational Networks and Skilled Labour Migration*, paper presented at Ladenburger Diskurs "Migration" Gottlieb Daimler und Karl Benz-Stiftung, Ladenburg, 14-15 February; Vertovec, S 2001, *Transnational Social Formations: Towards conceptual cross-fertilization*, paper presented at workshop on Transnational Migration: Comparative Perspectives, Princeton University, 30 June – 1 July.

47 Saxenian, AL 1999, *Silicon Valley's New Immigrant Entrepreneurs*, Public Policy Institute of California, San Francisco.

48 Saxenian, AL 1999, *Silicon Valley's New Immigrant Entrepreneurs*, Public Policy Institute of California, San Francisco.

networks for the benefit of local development and migrant attraction programs. Arguably, the same thinking could be applied in the regional development context, and would involve governments facilitating networks by building the capacity of migrant groups and through its settlement planning activities. This would have the benefit of helping to meet regional development objectives by facilitating migration to target communities, while remaining responsive to the realities of broader migratory trends.

## Part 2: Understanding Attraction and Retention

### Success factors operate to different degrees in different circumstances

Generally speaking, the regional development literature is fairly consistent in terms of the factors that contribute to regional settlement and retention. This is true of both domestic Australian literature, as well as that sourced from overseas. The weight of evidence suggests that employment, family connections, service and infrastructure availability, social and community connections and regional characteristics, all have a role to play in the retention process.<sup>49</sup>

Where there are differences however, is in the level of influence these factors have on individual decision making. This is an important issue to note about the literature, because it tends to highlight the need for a more nuanced view about the role that each factor plays. It also helps to understand the difference between factors that attract migrants to regional areas, and those that facilitate their retention, which appears to boil down to the relative importance of each factor over time, as distinct from there being an entirely different set of factors related to attraction and retention.<sup>50</sup> In other words, it appears that all of the factors are relevant to both attraction and retention, but operate in different ways (i.e. as push factors or pull factors and low influence or high influence), depending on the circumstances.

As one example, some of the literature notes that employment is one of the most important factors, if not the most important factor, in attracting migrants to particular regional areas.<sup>51</sup> At the initial stage of settlement (and even before that) employment could therefore act as a pull factor / attractor. When it comes to long-term retention however, employment can act as a push factor / detractor if the employment opportunities are no longer perceived as being sufficient, or

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49 Griffiths, J, Laffan, W and Jones, A 2010, *Factors that influence skilled migrants locating in regional areas*, Institute for Social Science Research, Brisbane; Pruegger, V [date unknown], *An Analysis of Immigrant Attraction and Retention Patterns*

*among Western Canadian CMAs*, Prairie Metropolis Centre Working Paper Series, Calgary; Miles, R et al 2006, 'The Attraction and Retention of Professionals to Regional Areas', *Australasian Journal of Regional Studies*, vol. 12, no. 2, pp. 129-152; Collins, J and Krivokapic-Skoko, B 2008, *Attraction and Retention of New Immigrants in Regional and Rural Australia*, Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation, Canberra; Hugo, G, Khoo, SE, and McDonald, P 2006, 'Attracting Skilled Migrants to Regional Areas: What Does It Take?', *People and Place*, vol. 14, no. 3, pp. 26-36; Hugo, G 2008, 'Australia's State Specific and Regional Migration Scheme: An Assessment of its Impacts in South Australia', *International Migration & Integration*, vol. 9, pp. 125-145; Spoonley, P and Bedford, R 2008, 'Responding to regional labour demand: International migration and labour markets in New Zealand's regions', *International Migration & Integration*, vol. 9, pp. 203-223.

50 Wulff, M and Dharmalingam, A 2008, 'Retaining Skilled Migrants in Regional Australia: The Role of Social Connectedness', *International Migration & Integration*, vol. 9, pp. 147-160.

51 Department of Immigration and Citizenship 2007, *New Migrant Outcomes: Results from the third longitudinal survey of migrants to Australia*, Canberra; Griffiths, J, Laffan, W and Jones, A 2010, *Factors that influence skilled migrants locating in regional areas*, Institute for Social Science Research, Brisbane.

if there are better employment prospects elsewhere (in which case it could also be considered a pull factor for the alternative location).<sup>52</sup>

The point of this is to highlight the fact that, while the factors leading to attraction and retention are arguably the same, the *influence* those factors have, and the role they play in migrants' decision making may change at various points in time, depending on the individual, their location and specific circumstances. This reinforces a view put forward in the literature that facilitating retention requires a longer-term perspective on migrant settlement. As a previous departmental study has noted for example, '[w]hile initial impressions and expectations, positive or negative, can shape decisions about whether or not to remain in a locality, more weight is likely to be given to the experience of living in a locality over a period of time'.<sup>53</sup> The factors presented below should therefore be considered with that in mind.

## Part 3: Critical Success Factors

### Employment

The opportunity for secure, permanent, full time and well paid employment is generally considered a critical factor in attracting migrants to regional areas. Employment is a recurring theme in the academic literature and there are a range of studies, both in Australia and internationally, that suggest it is one of the most important factors driving migrant decision making on settlement location. Some of these studies, including the third Longitudinal Study of Immigrants to Australia (LSIA), have noted that employment was in fact the most significant influence on where skilled migrants choose to settle, followed by preferred lifestyle and family location.<sup>54</sup> Employment may be a particularly important issue in the context of regional communities, owing to the fact that regional labour markets can be quite 'thin', in so far as they offer limited depth in terms of the variety of employment available and the options for advancement.

However, consistent with the view that the factors operate differently depending on the individual's circumstances and the context in which they live, a number of other studies provide alternative views on the role of employment in attraction and retention. One such study examined the retention patterns of migrants in six Western Canadian cities, and noted that although employment is an important issue for migrants, it does not necessarily affect their decision making in a significant way.<sup>55</sup> Rather, this study found that factors associated with the levels of cultural diversity and the quality of the social environment played a more significant role in fostering retention.<sup>56</sup> Similarly, a number of Australian studies, including by the University of Adelaide's Graeme Hugo, have suggested that 'while the availability of suitable employment

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52 Griffiths, J, Laffan, W and Jones, A 2010, Factors that influence skilled migrants locating in regional areas, Institute for Social Science Research, Brisbane.

53 Griffiths, J, Laffan, W and Jones, A 2010, Factors that influence skilled migrants locating in regional areas, Institute for Social Science Research, Brisbane.

54 Department of Immigration and Citizenship 2007, *New Migrant Outcomes: Results from the third longitudinal survey of migrants to Australia*, Canberra; Griffiths, J, Laffan, W and Jones, A 2010, *Factors that influence skilled migrants locating in regional areas*, Institute for Social Science Research, Brisbane; Collins, J and Krivokapic-Skoko, B 2008, *Attraction and Retention of New Immigrants in Regional and Rural Australia*, Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation, Canberra.

55 Pruegger, V 2003, *An Analysis of Immigrant Attraction and Retention Patterns among Western Canadian CMA's*, Prairie Metropolis Centre, Calgary.

56 Pruegger, V 2003, *An Analysis of Immigrant Attraction and Retention Patterns among Western Canadian CMA's*, Prairie Metropolis Centre, Calgary.

is a *necessary* condition' for attracting migrants to regional areas, it is not a *sufficient* factor by itself.<sup>57</sup>

The diversity of findings with respect to the impact of employment on migrant settlement highlights the risks inherent in attempting to generalise about the role of different factors in retention. As noted above for example, even if employment is the most significant factor in initially attracting migrants to a regional location, it may play a lesser role over the long-term as other factors such as family ties, the availability of services and infrastructure, and social connections have a more significant influence. This could have important implications for government policy, because it both supports the view highlighted in the literature about the need for a longer-term approach to migrant retention, and could also reinforce concerns regarding the effectiveness of current visa based interventions, which (apart from Humanitarian visas) are primarily based on the visa holder having ongoing employment.

## Career advancement

It may also be the case that different aspects of employment play a more significant role over the long-term, compared to during the initial settlement period. For example, whereas the availability of employment may be the primary driver of migrant decision-making in the initial stages of settlement, the *quality* of the employment, including opportunities for advancement, may begin to have a more significant impact throughout later stages of settlement. For example, a study on the attraction and retention of professionals to regional areas of Queensland has noted that perceived limits to career development was a major reason for people moving to alternative locations.<sup>58</sup> Similar findings have emerged from a study in New Zealand, which highlighted the fact that restricted upward mobility and promotion options had a negative impact on retention, despite the presence of other factors such as lifestyle.<sup>59</sup>

### Box 1: Young Graduates Social Network (Southern Grampians, Victoria)

The Hamilton Campus of RMIT University facilitates a *Young Graduates Social Network*, which is designed to address the professional and social isolation many young professionals in the regions experience, owing to limited opportunities to engage in ongoing training and education. The Network engages with local business to identify issues related to professional development and has developed strategies to address these. Additionally, as a key stakeholder of the Network, RMIT is able to offer access to further education, research and external links and perspectives, which helps to strengthen the professional development of local professionals.

Source: Standing Committee on Regional Development 2004, *Attracting and retaining skilled people in regional Australia: A practitioner's guide*, Perth.

## Family member employment

The availability of employment for other family members is also identified in the literature as an important factor in both attraction and retention. In fact, facilitating employment for partners, including by implementing recruitment strategies that seek out opportunities for professional couples, was considered particularly important by stakeholders involved in the Queensland

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57 Hugo, G 2008, 'Australia's State-Specific and Regional Migration Scheme: An Assessment of its Impacts in South Australia', *International Migration and Integration*, vol. 9, pp. 125-145; Griffiths, J, Laffan, W and Jones, A 2010, *Factors that influence skilled migrants locating in regional areas*, Institute for Social Science Research, Brisbane; McDonald-Wilmsen et al 2009, 'Resettling Refugees in Rural and Regional Australia: Learning from Recent Policy and Program Initiatives', *The Australian Journal of Public Administration*, vol. 68, no. 1, pp. 97-111.

58 Miles, R et al 2006, 'The Attraction and Retention of Professionals to Regional Areas', *Australasian Journal of Regional Studies*, vol. 12, no. 2, pp. 129-152.

59 Spoonley, P and Bedford, R 2008, 'Responding to regional labour demand: International migration and labour markets in New Zealand's regions', *International Migration & Integration*, vol. 9, pp. 203-223.

study.<sup>60</sup> Whatever interventions are employed to facilitate the employment of other family members however, it is clear from the literature that it is an important issue requiring consideration. This is true not only in the context of achieving regional retention, but also in terms of settlement outcomes and broader issues around employment and social welfare in the regions (which could themselves impact on retention). As previous departmental studies have shown for example, the families of principal visa applicants generally have higher levels of job dissatisfaction than their partners, and have higher levels of unemployment and lower earnings compared to the national average.<sup>61</sup> Similar findings have also been produced elsewhere, including by the Australian Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation, with the researchers in that instance concluding that 'if the partners continue being unhappy with their jobs, long-term retention of immigrants may be unlikely'.<sup>62</sup> Facilitating employment options for partners may therefore be just as important a consideration in developing migration interventions as it is for the primary applicant themselves.

## Skills recognition

A common issue for new migrants in both metropolitan and regional areas is that of skills recognition. While this is a broader policy issue relevant to migrants outside the regional development context, it is useful to consider here owing to the important role that employment plays in attraction and retention in regional areas, and the obvious link that skills recognition has on employment outcomes. Some of the literature on migrant retention has noted that many migrants have jobs in the host country that are at a skill level lower than that held in their country of origin.<sup>63</sup> There are a number of examples of this, including case studies about senior engineers, pharmacists and other skilled professionals who work as cleaners, or in other low skilled jobs in their destination countries.<sup>64</sup> It is therefore worthwhile to note here as being an issue for possible further consideration in the regional development context.

## Family connections and settlement

A number of studies highlight the important role that families play in the retention process. Like employment, this is a multi-faceted factor incorporating the existence of family networks, the presence of family members with the primary visa holder, and the long-term settlement outcomes of family members themselves, all of which have an influence, in one way or another, on attraction and retention. Again, the different aspects comprising this critical success factor may operate in different ways depending on the length of time in question, as well as other individual circumstances.

## Family networks

Some of the academic literature emerging from Canada has documented the fact that many migrants are initially attracted to rural regions because of networks of family and friends.<sup>65</sup> A study on settlement patterns in Colchester County in Nova Scotia for example, found that all of

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60 Miles, R et al 2006, 'The Attraction and Retention of Professionals to Regional Areas', *Australasian Journal of Regional Studies*, vol. 12, no. 2, pp. 129-152.

61 Department of Immigration and Citizenship 2007, *Evaluation of Skilled Migration to the Riverina*, Canberra; Hugo, G 2008, 'Immigrant Settlement Outside of Australia's Capital Cities', *Population, Space and Place*, vol. 14, pp. 553-571.

62 Collins, J and Krivokapic-Skoko, B 2008, *Attraction and Retention of New Immigrants in Regional and Rural Australia*, Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation, Canberra.

63 Collins, J and Krivokapic-Skoko, B 2008, *Attraction and Retention of New Immigrants in Regional and Rural Australia*, Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation, Canberra.

64 Collins, J and Krivokapic-Skoko, B 2008, *Attraction and Retention of New Immigrants in Regional and Rural Australia*, Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation, Canberra.

65 Collins, J and Krivokapic-Skoko, B 2008, *Attraction and Retention of New Immigrants in Regional and Rural Australia*, Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation, Canberra.

the migrants surveyed initially learned about the region from their relatives, and that none of them would have had the opportunity to consider moving to that region were it not for the information family members had provided.<sup>66</sup> Additionally, for a small number of the migrants participating in that survey, family reunification was the *primary* factor shaping their decisions on where to live.<sup>67</sup> Family linkages were also found to be a key factor in settlement decisions in another Canadian study, this time focused on British Columbia,<sup>68</sup> and similar results have been identified through a number of studies in Australia.

The literature generally suggests that, like the availability of employment, family networks may play a lesser role over the long-term compared to during the initial movement or settlement periods. For example, a number of Australian studies suggest that while many migrants initially settle in rural and regional areas because of family reasons, once in Australia, their decisions become based more on other factors, such as quality of life or employment issues.<sup>69</sup> However, as the Canadian studies show, this may be dependent on the nature of the network in question (for example, whether it is based on an extended or an immediate family relationship, or simply a friendship). For example, one of those studies identified a positive correlation between the strength of those family ties and the likelihood of the migrant remaining in a particular community over the long-term.<sup>70</sup>

## Intact family units

Closely related to the issue of family networks is that of the intact family unit. While there are some overlaps between these issues in so far as family reunification is a key driver of initial settlement patterns (and, indeed, of secondary movement, where the family is not initially settled together), the effects of having an intact family unit have broader benefits in terms of retention. One of the most salient of these impacts identified in the literature is the role that families play in fostering a sense of personal adjustment and connection with the local community.

There is a significant body of academic literature for example, including on the broader aspects of migrant settlement and integration, that highlights the social and psychological implications of migration in terms of being able to adjust to the migrant's new life in their destination community.<sup>71</sup> Because the family is the central unit of human society in virtually all cultures and traditions,<sup>72</sup> it plays an important role in this settlement process by providing social and

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66 Flint, JD 2007, *Rural Immigrants Who Come to Stay: A case study of recent immigrants to Colchester County, Nova Scotia*, Atlantic Metropolis Centre Working Paper Series, Dalhousie; Collins, J and Krivokapic-Skoko, B 2008, *Attraction and Retention of New Immigrants in Regional and Rural Australia*, Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation, Canberra.

67 Flint, JD 2007, *Rural Immigrants Who Come to Stay: A case study of recent immigrants to Colchester County, Nova Scotia*, Atlantic Metropolis Centre Working Paper Series, Dalhousie.

68 Walton-Roberts, M 2005, 'Regional Immigration and Dispersal: Lessons from Small and Medium Sized Urban Centres in British Columbia', *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, vol. 37, no. 3, pp. 12-34.

69 Collins, J and Krivokapic-Skoko, B 2008, *Attraction and Retention of New Immigrants in Regional and Rural Australia*, Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation, Canberra.

70 Collins, J and Krivokapic-Skoko, B 2008, *Attraction and Retention of New Immigrants in Regional and Rural Australia*, Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation, Canberra; Walton-Roberts, M 2005, 'Regional Immigration and Dispersal: Lessons from Small and Medium Sized Urban Centres in British Columbia', *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, vol. 37, no. 3, pp. 12-34; Flint, JD 2007, *Rural Immigrants Who Come to Stay: A case study of recent immigrants to Colchester County, Nova Scotia*, Atlantic Metropolis Centre Working Paper Series, Dalhousie.

71 See, for example, Sonn, C 2002, 'Immigrant Adaptation: Understanding the Process through Sense of Community', in Fisher, AT, Sonn, CC and Bishop, BB (eds) 2002, *Sense of Community Research, Applications and Implications*, Kluwer, New York; Khoo, SE 1994, 'Immigrant families and change', *Bureau of Immigration and Population Research Bulletin*, no. 11, pp. 15-17.

72 Jastram, K and Newland, K [unpublished], *Family Unity and Refugee Protection*, Migration Policy Institute, Washington DC.

economic support and assistance, both in the immediate settlement period and over the long-term.<sup>73</sup>

Conversely, separation from family can weaken settlement by creating feelings of rejection and isolation, and by undermining migrants' sense of belonging in the wider community.<sup>74</sup> In the context of regional retention, the presence of family members may therefore facilitate greater connectedness with the local community, and potentially, a greater inclination to stay. This is certainly the view presented in some Australian studies, which have noted that the presence of family members, particularly when children are involved, can increase social connectedness.<sup>75</sup> Similarly, Castles and Miller have suggested that once migrants' children 'go to school in the new country, learn the language and develop peer group relationships', it becomes more difficult for the family to relocate.<sup>76</sup>

The potential to consider family groups as a whole and to facilitate their settlement via a more holistic policy intervention, rather than focusing on individual primary / secondary migrant applications, may therefore warrant consideration.

## Family settlement outcomes

Finally, an important determinant of whether or not migrants will stay in regional areas is the extent to which all of the family members are well settled in the host community themselves. A study emerging from Queensland has highlighted this in particular, noting that 'if the partner and family were not happy, retention of the professional was unlikely'.<sup>77</sup> Whether or not the family is well settled hinges on a number of factors commonly thought to encourage positive settlement outcomes more broadly, including the availability of social and other support networks, a welcoming and cohesive community, access to basic services such as health and education, and access to information that can help assist family decision making on a variety of matters.<sup>78</sup> A number of these issues are identified in the literature as being critical success factors of regional retention in themselves, and will be discussed in more detail later in this paper. For the present purposes however, it is sufficient to note that the family's own settlement outcomes are an important factor in determining retention, and the critical success factors are therefore equally as relevant to the family as to the principal visa holder.

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73 Khoo, SE 1994, 'Immigrant families and change', Bureau of Immigration and Population Research Bulletin, no. 11, pp. 15-17.

74 Sonn, CC and Bishop, BB (eds) 2002, *Sense of Community Research, Applications and Implications*, Kluwer, New York; Taylor, J and Stanovic, D 2005, *Refugees and regional settlement: Balancing priorities*, Brotherhood of St Laurence, Fitzroy.

75 Griffiths, J, Laffan, W and Jones, A 2010, *Factors that influence skilled migrants locating in regional areas*, Institute for Social Science Research, Brisbane; Wulff, M and Dharmalingam, A 2008, 'Retaining Skilled Migrants in Regional Australia: The Role of Social Connectedness', *International Migration & Integration*, vol. 9, pp. 147-160.

76 Castles, S and Miller, M 2009, *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World*, Palgrave MacMillan, New York.

77 Miles, R et al 2006, 'The Attraction and Retention of Professionals to Regional Areas', *Australasian Journal of Regional Studies*, vol. 12, no. 2, pp. 129-152.

78 Miles, R et al 2006, 'The Attraction and Retention of Professionals to Regional Areas', *Australasian Journal of Regional Studies*, vol. 12, no. 2, pp. 129-152.

### **Box 1: Kingaroy and South Burnett Medical Workforce Strategy (Queensland)**

In 1999, Kingaroy was faced with a crisis in its health and medical services as a result of dwindling numbers of health professionals choosing to stay in the region. Responding to community concerns about this issue, the Kingaroy Shire Mayor convened meetings with local doctors and other health professionals to determine an approach to addressing the growing issues in the local health profession. With support from the Queensland Government and the general community, Kingaroy established a strategy to overcome the medical professional shortage.

As part of its strategy, the Kingaroy community places a strong emphasis on supporting the families of medical professionals who move to the area. The support provided includes a range of different activities, including large community events and activities to encourage integration with the community at a level that individual families find comfortable.

Source: Standing Committee on Regional Development 2004, *Attracting and retaining skilled people in regional Australia: A practitioner's guide*, Perth.

## **Availability of services and infrastructure**

The availability of basic services and infrastructure is recognised throughout the literature as being an important factor driving retention in regional areas. Surveys of different migrant groups, both in Australia and internationally, have reported that experiences of poor public and community facilities, including schools, housing, transport, education and communications, have all contributed to dissatisfaction amongst migrant settlers and have led to out-migration.<sup>79</sup>

However, as has been noted elsewhere in this document, many of the critical success factors may be as equally applicable to the general community as they are to migrants. This is particularly the case in the context of services and infrastructure availability. These issues are not peculiar to migrants, and as such, require a broader policy response. However, it is also an issue that is particularly challenging to address, owing to the fact that the availability of services and infrastructure itself hinges on the level of demand and the population in particular areas. There is a circular cause and effect relationship in which the availability of services and infrastructure depends on population levels, while population levels themselves can be influenced by the availability of services and infrastructure.<sup>80</sup>

Nevertheless, while service and infrastructure availability are broader issues impacting on all residents of regional areas, there may be specific issues that a lack of services and infrastructure has on migrants, for example relating to Humanitarian settlement support or English language capability. The elements of this critical success factor should therefore be considered with these aspects in mind.

### **Available, appropriate and affordable housing**

The availability and affordability of appropriate housing in regional areas is consistently identified in the literature as being an important element in both attraction and retention. A Practitioner's Guide developed by an Australian Government committee on regional development has noted the positive emotional impact that having a home can have on personal

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79 Griffiths, J, Laffan, W and Jones, A 2010, *Factors that influence skilled migrants locating in regional areas*, Institute for Social Science Research, Brisbane; Pruegger, V [date unknown], *An Analysis of Immigrant Attraction and Retention Patterns*

among Western Canadian CMAs, Prairie Metropolis Centre Working Paper Series, Calgary.

80 Beer, A and Keane, R 2000, 'Population Decline and Service Delivery in Regional Australia: A South Australian Case Study', *People and Place*, vol. 8, no. 2 pp. 69-76; Collits, P 2000, *Small Town Decline and Survival: Trends, Success Factors and Policy Issues*, paper presented at the Future of Australia's Country Towns conference, 29 June, Bendigo.

comfort and satisfaction.<sup>81</sup> According to that report, this is particularly the case where a spouse or partner spends considerable time at home.<sup>82</sup> The availability of appropriate housing could therefore have positive benefits in terms of settlement outcomes and of migrants being able to adjust well to their new surroundings, which in turn could create a situation in which retention may be more likely.

## **Box 2: Housing and Accommodation Strategy and Action Plan (Colac, Victoria)**

In May 2002, the Colac Otway Shire adopted a *Colac Housing and Accommodation Strategy and Action Plan*. This strategy was developed in consultation with a range of people in different sectors of the Colac community, including the Council, real estate agents, lawyers, major businesses, developers from within and outside Colac, retailers, public housing agencies and community leaders.

The strategy was developed to provide a realistic basis for dealing with immediate accommodation issues and a medium and long-term plan for improving the range of housing options in Colac, owing to concerns that limited availability of accommodation would negatively impact the town's ability to attract and retain skilled workers.

Source: Standing Committee on Regional Development 2004, *Attracting and retaining skilled people in regional Australia: A practitioner's guide*, Perth.

Nevertheless, housing issues in regional areas are significantly impacting on the ability of many communities to attract and retain migrants.<sup>83</sup> While the type of housing issue varies between regions, it can encompass housing shortages in areas experiencing significantly expanded industries or development, poor quality housing stock in smaller inland communities, and a lack of low cost rental properties.<sup>84</sup> It can also include a lack of housing that does not meet individual family circumstances, such as extended family situations. Some studies have also identified inefficient management of public housing by regulatory bodies as being an issue that has exacerbated housing issues. The report into attraction and retention of skilled professionals in Queensland for example, noted that health professionals, who moved to the northern Queensland town of Moura, had significant problems finding accommodation there despite the availability of a large number of housing commission premises.<sup>85</sup>

Interestingly, there are some discrepancies in the academic literature about the extent to which housing prices impact on migrant decision making regarding their settlement location. The departmental study that preceded this report for example, found that of the migrants surveyed for that research, a majority commented on the high cost of housing as being of particular concern.<sup>86</sup> In contrast, one of the Canadian studies found no negative correlation between housing affordability and retention, suggesting that while housing costs may be burdensome,

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81 Standing Committee on Regional Development 2004, *Attracting and retaining skilled people in regional Australia: A practitioner's guide*, Perth.

82 Standing Committee on Regional Development 2004, *Attracting and retaining skilled people in regional Australia: A practitioner's guide*, Perth.

83 Hugo, G 2008, 'Immigrant Settlement Outside of Australia's Capital Cities', *Population, Space and Place*, vol. 14, pp. 553-571.

84 Standing Committee on Regional Development 2004, *Attracting and retaining skilled people in regional Australia: A practitioner's guide*, Perth.

85 Miles, R et al 2006, 'The Attraction and Retention of Professionals to Regional Areas', *Australasian Journal of Regional Studies*, vol. 12, no. 2, pp. 129-152.

86 Griffiths, J, Laffan, W and Jones, A 2010, *Factors that influence skilled migrants locating in regional areas*, Institute for Social Science Research, Brisbane.

they were not necessarily a significant factor in relocation decisions.<sup>87</sup> Australia's housing prices, which are amongst the highest in the world, may explain this discrepancy.<sup>88</sup>

One other noteworthy aspect of this finding is that, according to the study, retention rates tend to be higher for larger regional centres, where rents can also be higher.<sup>89</sup> This suggests that housing costs may be tolerable when other factors are at play, but again, would depend on context and individual circumstances. While these findings may hold true for some skilled migrants for example, housing affordability could have significantly negative impacts on refugee or Humanitarian entrants, owing to their relative economic disadvantage and other vulnerabilities. Indeed, the availability and affordability of housing is often identified as a key challenge impacting on the settlement outcomes of migrants broadly speaking, not just in the context of regional retention.<sup>90</sup> Similarly, as has been noted above, issues like housing availability and affordability are policy challenges that impact on the entire Australian population, and are not isolated only to migrants.<sup>91</sup>

## Health care and education

The availability of and access to health care and education services is an issue relevant to regional attraction and retention, particularly for migrants with a young family. Access to education has clear relevance for migrants with school aged children, and indeed, various reports show that families tend to relocate to major centres as their children move on to secondary school or university, where there is limited availability in their initial settlement location.<sup>92,93</sup> For example, a study by Professor Graeme Hugo found that some 80 per cent of the 1,175 migrants forming part of his survey would not live in regional areas because of a lack of education facilities.<sup>94</sup> Even where it is available, the quality of education may also be a key factor in migrants' decisions about settlement location. This has proven to be an issue in New Zealand for example, where regional centres often struggle against the levels and quality of education facilities available in metropolitan areas.<sup>95</sup>

Access to healthcare is also an important factor in retention. However, in addition to basic availability, the literature also highlights the important role that culturally appropriate and specialist health services have in migrant settlement and therefore in facilitating retention. Limited English language capability, unfamiliarity with local health systems, including appointment-based services, and health professionals untrained in cultural sensitivity matters

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87 Pruegger, V [date unknown], *An Analysis of Immigrant Attraction and Retention Patterns among Western Canadian CMAs*, Prairie Metropolis Centre Working Paper Series, Calgary.

88 Performance Urban Planning 2011, *Demographia International Housing Affordability Survey*, Christchurch.

89 Pruegger, V [date unknown], *An Analysis of Immigrant Attraction and Retention Patterns among Western Canadian CMAs*, Prairie Metropolis Centre Working Paper Series, Calgary.

90 See, for example, Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria 2008, *Availability, Affordability, Accessibility: Housing Victoria's New Migrant and Refugee Communities*, Melbourne; Atem, P and Wilson, L 2011, *Housing pathways for African refugees in Australia: towards an understanding of African refugee housing issues*, The Australian Sociological Association, Victoria; Refugee Council of Australia, 2010, *Key issues and priorities in refugee settlement policy*, Sydney.

91 McDonald-Wilmsen et al 2009, 'Resettling Refugees in Rural and Regional Australia: Learning from Recent Policy and Program Initiatives', *The Australian Journal of Public Administration*, vol. 68, no. 1, pp. 97-111.

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93 Miles, R et al 2006, 'The Attraction and Retention of Professionals to Regional Areas', *Australasian Journal of Regional Studies*, vol. 12, no. 2, pp. 129-152; Hugo, G, Khoo, SE, and McDonald, P 2006, 'Attracting Skilled Migrants to Regional Areas: What Does It Take?', *People and Place*, vol. 14, no. 3, pp. 26-36.

94 Hugo, G, Khoo, SE, and McDonald, P 2006, 'Attracting Skilled Migrants to Regional Areas: What Does It Take?', *People and Place*, vol. 14, no. 3, pp. 26-36.

95 Spoonley, P 2011, *Email correspondence with Department of Immigration and Citizenship*, Palmerston North, New Zealand.

have all been cited as key inhibitors to the delivery of health services to migrants.<sup>96</sup> These issues are likely to be exacerbated in the case of refugee and Humanitarian entrants, who may also have very specific health needs that cannot be met from local services.<sup>97</sup> As noted in Part 1 of this report however, migration may in fact facilitate the growth of social and economic infrastructure relevant to migrants, including culturally appropriate health services. But the extent to which this holds true is dependant on the level of demand and the size of the migrant community.<sup>98</sup>

## Settlement services

Both the settlement outcomes of new arrivals in regional centres and the likelihood of their long-term retention may be negatively impacted by a lack of regional services focused on settlement, particularly that of refugee and Humanitarian entrants. Various Australian studies have noted for example that 'not all regional areas have the structures, community support or linkages to provide adequately for refugee needs'.<sup>99</sup> As noted above, this can be a barrier to people understanding and accessing mainstream services, particularly where they have limited English skills, and may reduce the overall likelihood of achieving retention by producing unsatisfactory settlement outcomes. As noted in Section 1 of this paper however, 'settlement' need not be focused solely on refugee and Humanitarian entrants. Indeed, the extent to which people in other migration streams live in particular areas on a long-term basis may be assisted by the availability of settlement type services for those groups.

## Social connections and welcoming communities

### Social connections

In much the same way that family connections can provide a support base for migrants settling in new areas, and thus lead to increased retention, social connections and welcoming communities can also create an environment in which retention is more likely. For new migrants, feeling socially secure and having a sense of belonging to the community are critical to them taking ownership of their new home and place and to feeling settled. Social networks within the community, including religious, cultural, sporting and other community groups, play an important role in achieving this outcome by providing a range of social, economic and cultural support mechanisms and by forging greater ties to the community.<sup>100</sup> As much of the literature on social capital has noted for example, 'communities and individuals become socially connected when people join organisations, volunteer, socialise with friends and family, participate in learning activities or develop trust with their neighbours'.<sup>101</sup> Fostering a sense of belonging in new

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96 Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia 2011, *Settlement is Life-long Process: Achieving social inclusion and participation for new and emerging communities beyond the immediate settlement period*, Canberra.

97 Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia 2011, *Settlement is Life-long Process: Achieving social inclusion and participation for new and emerging communities beyond the immediate settlement period*, Canberra; Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia 2010, *FECCA Regional Migration Policy*, Canberra; McDonald-Wilmsen et al 2009, 'Resettling Refugees in Rural and Regional Australia: Learning from Recent Policy and Program Initiatives', *The Australian Journal of Public Administration*, vol. 68, no. 1, pp. 97-111.

98 De Haas, H 2010, 'The Internal Dynamics of Migration Processes: A Theoretical Inquiry', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, vol. 36, no. 10, pp. 1587-1617.

99 McDonald-Wilmsen et al 2009, 'Resettling Refugees in Rural and Regional Australia: Learning from Recent Policy and Program Initiatives', *The Australian Journal of Public Administration*, vol. 68, no. 1, pp. 97-111; Missingham, B, Dibden, J and Cocklin, C 2006, 'A multicultural countryside? Ethnic minorities in rural Australia', *Rural Society*, vol. 16, no. 2, pp. 131-150.

100 Wulff, M and Dharmalingam, A 2008, 'Retaining Skilled Migrants in Regional Australia: The Role of Social Connectedness', *International Migration & Integration*, vol. 9, pp. 147-160.

101 See, for example, Wulff, M and Dharmalingam, A 2008, 'Retaining Skilled Migrants in Regional Australia: The Role of Social Connectedness', *International Migration & Integration*, vol. 9, pp. 147-160; Stone, W 2001, *Measuring Social Capital: Towards a theoretically informed measurement framework for researching social capital in family and community life*, Research Paper No. 24, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne; Stone, W 2000, *Social*

migrants, while vitally important as a settlement strategy in its own right, would therefore take on greater importance in the context of facilitating regional retention.

### **Box 3: Establishing Incorporated Associations (Shepparton and other regions, Victoria)**

The Ethnic Council of Shepparton and District provides practical advice and guidance to several ethnic groups in the area to establish incorporated associations. These associations foster strong networks which members can draw upon for support and advice. In addition, incorporated associations are well placed to advocate for the needs of members and to operate as a central point for receiving relevant information from the broader community.

Source: Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria 2006, *A Guide to Welcoming Committees and Activities for Regional Skilled Migrants*, Melbourne.

### **The impact of discrimination**

One of the biggest inhibitors to building social capital however, and particularly in the context of migrant settlement, is the level of discrimination or racism experienced by new arrivals. This is an issue that is identified fairly consistently in the regional retention literature as being a possible negative influence on retention. For example, a lack of acceptance of new migrants by locals, and other forms of discrimination, real or perceived, have been noted as issues that place additional stresses on migrants attempting to integrate into local communities, which in turn undermines retention.<sup>102</sup>

A number of anecdotal examples of this were identified in the research for this paper, including instances of migrant families leaving their initial settlement locations because of consistent levels of discrimination. In contrast however, one of the Canadian studies suggested that, while it could be expected that discriminatory environments may contribute to people's decision to relocate from a community, the researcher's findings did not suggest a significant relationship between discrimination and a lack of retention.<sup>103</sup>

The impact of discrimination in the regional settlement context has received some attention in the literature owing to questions about whether regional communities are less multicultural than metropolitan centres,<sup>104</sup> and presumably are therefore more susceptible to higher levels of prejudice and intolerance. However, more recent research has attempted to dispute this view, noting in particular that not only are non-English speaking migrant communities highly concentrated in particular regional areas, but that the enthusiasm with which some communities have welcomed migrants in fact rebuts the 'conventional stereotypes of regional populations having conservative and even racist attitudes'.<sup>105</sup>

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*capital, social cohesion and social security*, Paper presented at the Year 2000 International Research Conference on Social Security, 25-27 September; Australian Bureau of Statistics 2002, *Social Capital: A Discussion Paper*, Canberra.

102 Miles, R et al 2006, 'The Attraction and Retention of Professionals to Regional Areas', *Australasian Journal of Regional Studies*, vol. 12, no. 2, pp. 129-152; Griffiths, J, Laffan, W and Jones, A 2010, *Factors that influence skilled migrants locating in regional areas*, Institute for Social Science Research, Brisbane.

103 Pruegger, V [date unknown], *An Analysis of Immigrant Attraction and Retention Patterns among Western Canadian CMAs*, Prairie Metropolis Centre Working Paper Series, Calgary.

104 See, for example, Birrell, B and Rapson, V 2002, 'Two Australia's: Migrant Settlement at the End of the 20th Century', *People and Place*, vol. 10, no. 1, pp. 10-25; Missingham, B, Dibden, J and Cocklin, C 2006, 'A multicultural countryside? Ethnic minorities in rural Australia', *Rural Society*, vol. 16, no. 2, pp. 131-150; Khakbaz, M [date unknown], *Regional Engagement of Migrant Communities: Challenges and Innovations*, Centre for Multicultural and Community Development, Queensland.

105 Hugo, G 2008, 'Immigrant Settlement Outside of Australia's Capital Cities', *Population, Space and Place*, vol. 14, pp. 553-571; Missingham, B, Dibden, J and Cocklin, C 2006, 'A multicultural countryside? Ethnic minorities in rural Australia', *Rural Society*, vol. 16, no. 2, pp. 131-150.

Nevertheless, issues related to discrimination do remain an issue requiring consideration, and indeed have been noted as such by migrants participating in a number of surveys on their experiences in regional communities.<sup>106</sup> Additionally, a 2009 Scanlon Foundation study into social cohesion in Australia noted some differences in attitudes even between the outer urban regions surveyed for that report.<sup>107</sup> This suggests that, as might be expected, attitudes towards migrants and migration will vary depending on the particular community in question and, while it would be unfair to generalise about the level of intolerance in regional communities, discrimination will continue to be an issue that may impact on retention.

## Welcoming communities

Amongst the many positive case studies of successful migrant settlement in regional areas, one of the most critical factors has been the presence of a 'welcoming community'. While this is closely related to social connections, owing to the important role that community, religious and cultural groups play in forming a welcoming community, it also encompasses broader issues related to the role of communities as a whole in facilitating the settlement process. For example, Canadian research has emphasised the important role that communities and local governments play in providing resources and information to migrants and to the broader population, as part of a concerted effort to build consensus amongst all residents on community planning and development and the role of migrants in that process.<sup>108</sup> This has been reflected in a number of Australian studies, which have noted the *absence* of community and local government investment in retention as being a significant contributory factor to some migrants experiencing difficulties in their settlement process.<sup>109</sup>

### Box 4: The Shepparton WEAVE Program (Shepparton, Victoria)

Developed through the City of Greater Shepparton, the WEAVE Program – *Welcome to Ethnic Families Through Assistance, Volunteer, Orientation and Education* – matches new arrivals with a volunteer who assists in orientation and settlement processes. The program trains volunteers to assist new arrivals in a variety of tasks associated with settlement, including locating local places of interest and service providers, linking migrants to local sporting and service clubs and undertaking daily activities such as public transport use and shopping. Volunteers for the program receive training from the local Equity and Access worker in cross cultural awareness and other issues related to volunteering.

Source: Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria 2006, *A Guide to Welcoming Committees and Activities for Regional Skilled Migrants*, Melbourne.

In addition to the benefits a welcoming community has on retention, some of the literature has also noted that the diversity of the local population can also have a positive impact. One of the Canadian studies for example, found a strong positive correlation between retention and the levels of diversity, which was tested on the assumption that migrants may be more comfortable in environments that are more culturally diverse.<sup>110</sup> Other Australian studies have similarly noted

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106 Hugo, G 2008, 'Immigrant Settlement Outside of Australia's Capital Cities', *Population, Space and Place*, vol. 14, pp. 553-571; Griffiths, J, Laffan, W and Jones, A 2010, *Factors that influence skilled migrants locating in regional areas*, Institute for Social Science Research, Brisbane.

107 Markus, A 2009, *Mapping Social Cohesion 2009: Summary Report*, Scanlon Foundation, Melbourne.

108 Collins, J and Krivokapic-Skoko, B 2008, *Attraction and Retention of New Immigrants in Regional and Rural Australia*, Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation, Canberra; Flint, JD 2007, *Rural Immigrants Who Come to Stay: A case study of recent immigrants to Colchester County, Nova Scotia*, Atlantic Metropolis Centre Working Paper Series, Dalhousie; Walton-Roberts, M 2005, 'Regional Immigration and Dispersal: Lessons from Small and Medium Sized Urban Centres in British Columbia', *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, vol. 37, no. 3, pp. 12-34.

109 McDonald-Wilmsen et al 2009, 'Resettling Refugees in Rural and Regional Australia: Learning from Recent Policy and Program Initiatives', *The Australian Journal of Public Administration*, vol. 68, no. 1, pp. 97-111.

110 Pruegger, V [date unknown], *An Analysis of Immigrant Attraction and Retention Patterns among Western Canadian CMAs*, *Prairie Metropolis Centre Working Paper Series*, Calgary.

that migrants who settle in areas that do not have established communities of the same cultural background to the new arrival, can feel isolated from the community, which clearly undermines their settlement into the area.<sup>111</sup>

## Regional characteristics

The literature notes that the characteristics commonly associated with regional communities can have an influence on attraction and retention. The perceived advantages that the regions have over metropolitan areas, including 'quiet', 'close-knit' and 'relaxed' communities, healthy natural environments and open spaces, safety and population size, have generally, though not universally, been identified as factors that migrants consider to be positive aspects of living in a regional area.<sup>112</sup> However, a small minority of migrants taking part in a recent departmental survey reported their experience in regional communities as one of boredom and isolation, which possibly just reflects the fact that a regional lifestyle is not for everyone.<sup>113</sup>

Similarly, other Australian studies have noted 'lifestyle' as being the most common reason for migrants not wanting to live outside of capital cities, which is a factor particularly relevant to single and younger migrants.<sup>114</sup> In this respect, young migrants may in fact become part of the 'youth-flight' from regional areas, which, as noted above, is a trend as relevant to native born youth as it is to migrants.<sup>115</sup> Furthermore, a study in New Zealand has suggested that 'while lifestyle aspects often provide a positive selling point', other factors, such as employment and economic opportunities, may have more influence on decisions about whether or not migrants will stay in regional areas.<sup>116</sup>

One additional point to note about the academic view on regional characteristics is that it appears that migrants from less developed countries and from South Africa may be more likely to move to and stay in regional areas than their counterparts from places like the United Kingdom, Europe and the United States. This may be because migrants from less developed countries are more used to living in regional communities and may have come from a regional area in their country of origin.<sup>117</sup> This has a number of clear impacts on issues related to the promotion of migration to regional areas and of recruitment practices, as well as the delivery of culturally appropriate and specialist settlement services.<sup>118</sup>

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111 McDonald-Wilmsen et al 2009, 'Resettling Refugees in Rural and Regional Australia: Learning from Recent Policy and Program Initiatives', *The Australian Journal of Public Administration*, vol. 68, no. 1, pp. 97-111.

112 Griffiths, J, Laffan, W and Jones, A 2010, *Factors that influence skilled migrants locating in regional areas*, Institute for Social Science Research, Brisbane; Wulff, M and Dharmalingam, A 2008, 'Retaining Skilled Migrants in Regional Australia: The Role of Social Connectedness', *International Migration & Integration*, vol. 9, pp. 147-160; Collins, J and Krivokapic-Skoko, B 2008, *Attraction and Retention of New Immigrants in Regional and Rural Australia*, Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation, Canberra.

113 Griffiths, J, Laffan, W and Jones, A 2010, *Factors that influence skilled migrants locating in regional areas*, Institute for Social Science Research, Brisbane.

114 Hugo, G, Khoo, SE, and McDonald, P 2006, 'Attracting Skilled Migrants to Regional Areas: What Does It Take?', *People and Place*, vol. 14, no. 3, pp. 26-36.

115 McDonald-Wilmsen et al 2009, 'Resettling Refugees in Rural and Regional Australia: Learning from Recent Policy and Program Initiatives', *The Australian Journal of Public Administration*, vol. 68, no. 1, pp. 97-111; Eacott, C and Sonn, C 2006, 'Beyond education and employment: Exploring youth experiences of their communities, place attachment and reasons for migration', *Rural Society*, vol. 16, no. 2, pp. 199-214.

116 Spoonley, P and Bedford, R 2008, 'Responding to regional labour demand: International migration and labour markets in New Zealand's regions', *International Migration & Integration*, vol. 9, pp. 203-223.

117 Hugo, G, Khoo, SE, and McDonald, P 2006, 'Attracting Skilled Migrants to Regional Areas: What Does It Take?', *People and Place*, vol. 14, no. 3, pp. 26-36.

118 Hugo, G, Khoo, SE, and McDonald, P 2006, 'Attracting Skilled Migrants to Regional Areas: What Does It Take?', *People and Place*, vol. 14, no. 3, pp. 26-36.

It suggests, for example, that strategies for bringing migrants to the regions and retaining them there may have better chances of success if migrants are selected for their regional 'suitability', as well as for their skills and employment characteristics. This view has also been raised in the Queensland study on attracting skilled migrants to the regions, which suggested that migrants in regional areas should be chosen in a more selective and targeted manner, taking into account the extent to which they suit the region.<sup>119</sup> In this respect, the study noted older migrants, or younger migrants with a rural background as potentially being better candidates than people without those characteristics.<sup>120</sup>

Similarly, the lessons from various approaches to refugee settlement point to the same conclusion. For example, the UNHCR has noted that community planning and placement decisions should 'take into account the characteristics, attributes and wishes of resettled refugees', and that settlement planning should balance the needs of refugees with that of the receiving community (for example, labour demand, and regional and rural development objectives).<sup>121</sup> In that respect, the UNHCR notes that 'refugees who lived in a rural community in their country of origin may feel more comfortable ... in a rural environment'.<sup>122</sup> The regional development agenda may therefore benefit from utilising placement practices utilised in the refugee settlement context.

## Conclusion

As a result of the challenges being faced by many regional communities in Australia, including population decline and ageing, economic stagnation and increased pressure on service delivery and infrastructure, Australian governments at the national, state and territory and local levels have concerned themselves with helping to drive economic prosperity in the regions.<sup>123</sup> The migration program has been one tool with which governments have attempted to support regional development by helping to meet the skills needs of regional employers and of adding to the stock of residents living in regional areas.<sup>124</sup> However, one of the key challenges in utilising the migration program to assist in regional development outcomes has been in ensuring that migrants who do settle in regional areas stay there over the long-term. But the extent to which migration based interventions actually facilitate long-term regional retention remains unclear. In order to develop more effective policies and programs in this area, the academic literature suggests that it is therefore important to develop an understanding of the factors that contribute to regional retention.

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119 Miles, R et al 2006, 'The Attraction and Retention of Professionals to Regional Areas', *Australasian Journal of Regional Studies*, vol. 12, no. 2, pp. 129-152.

120 Miles, R et al 2006, 'The Attraction and Retention of Professionals to Regional Areas', *Australasian Journal of Regional Studies*, vol. 12, no. 2, pp. 129-152.

121 UNHCR 2002, *Refugee Resettlement: An International Handbook to Guide Reception and Integration*, Geneva.

122 UNHCR 2002, *Refugee Resettlement: An International Handbook to Guide Reception and Integration*, Geneva.

123 See, for example, Albanese, A 2008, *Regional Development Australia*, Statement by the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government, Canberra; Queensland Government 2010, *Economic Development in Regional Queensland*, <[www.regions.qld.gov.au/dsdweb/v4/apps/web/content.cfm?id=4642](http://www.regions.qld.gov.au/dsdweb/v4/apps/web/content.cfm?id=4642)> accessed 20 August 2011; New South Wales Government, Regional NSW, <[www.business.nsw.gov.au/invest-in-nsw/regional-nsw](http://www.business.nsw.gov.au/invest-in-nsw/regional-nsw)> accessed 20 August 2011; State Government Victoria, Developing Rural and Regional Victoria, <[www.rdv.vic.gov.au/](http://www.rdv.vic.gov.au/)> accessed 20 August 2011.

124 Griffiths, J, Laffan, W and Jones, A 2010, Factors that influence skilled migrants locating in regional areas, Institute for Social Science Research, Brisbane; Wulff, M and Dharmalingam, A 2008, 'Retaining Skilled Migrants in Regional Australia: The Role of Social Connectedness', *International Migration & Integration*, vol. 9, pp. 147-160; Hugo, G, Khoo, SE, and McDonald, P 2006, 'Attracting Skilled Migrants to Regional Areas: What Does It Take?', *People and Place*, vol. 14, no. 3, pp. 26-36; Hugo, G 2008, 'Australia's State Specific and Regional Migration Scheme: An Assessment of its Impacts in South Australia', *International Migration & Integration*, vol. 9, pp. 125-145.

However, much of the current literature is focused on predominantly 'micro-level' factors impacting on human mobility within countries, such as the differences between regional communities and big cities. What is lacking is an understanding of how broader international factors, such as the trend towards temporary migration, or the impact of migrant 'networks', can also affect internal mobility. Similarly, in both the academic literature and in practice, the links and similarities between diverse fields of practice, including regional development, international and internal migration, and Humanitarian settlement, are rarely drawn together as part of a cohesive approach. Yet placing regional development and migration into a broader context is useful not only in providing a more holistic understanding of the factors impacting on migration to and from regional areas, but also in bringing together the lessons from those diverse fields of practice relevant to regional development. It is also useful in identifying new and innovative approaches to regional development, such as using a place-based model to build local capacity, focus government attention and leverage international migratory trends.

This paper has therefore attempted to show how areas of academic research and practice not traditionally linked with regional retention, including international migration and refugee settlement, are highly relevant to questions about internal migration. It has also examined the more 'micro-level' factors commonly seen as impacting on migrants' decisions about their choice of location, in order to better understand attraction and retention. In particular, it has noted that the factors that facilitate attraction and retention are generally the same, but that the influence those factors have, and the role they play in migrants' decision making may change at various points in time, depending on the individual, their location and specific circumstances.

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